

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, TH, CB
SUBJ: THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER FRICTION

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SUMMARY: TWO SEPARATE INCIDENTS ALONG THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER TOOK PLACE OVER THE WEEKEND OF AUGUST 6-7. THAI SECURITY FORCES IN THE BORDER AREA REMAIN ON ALERT. LT. COL. IN COMMAND OF RTA BATTALION IN ARANYAPRATHET REPLACED BY FULL ARMY COLONEL FOR FAILURE TO CONSULT SUPERIORS REGARDING OPERATIONS ON THE BORDER. TWO RTA COMPANIES SENT TO BORDER PROVINCES OF SURIN. THAI VILLAGERS EVACUATE THEIR HOMES IN SEVERAL BORDER VILLAGES IN TA PRAYA DISTRICT (PRACHINBURI), FOLLOWING KHMER ROUGE ATTACKS AUGUST 2. END SUMMARY.

1. THAI PRESS REPORTED TWO BORDER INCIDENTS BETWEEN THAILAND AND CAMBODIA OVER THE WEEKEND (AUGUST 6-7). BOTH INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN AREAS THAT HAD BEEN THE SCENE OF CLASHES BETWEEN THAI AND KR FORCES IN RECENT WEEKS. THE FIRST INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN TRAT PROVINCE ON AUGUST 6 WHEN A THAI MARINE PATROL CLASHED BRIEFLY WITH A KR UNIT IN THE MOUNTAINOUS BORDER AREA. TWO THAI MARINES WERE REPORTED WOUNDED; KHMER ROUGE (KR)
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CASUALTIES ARE UNKNOWN. ACCORDING TO MILITARY SOURCES QUOTED IN THE BANGKOK PRESS, THAI AND CAMBODIAN FORCES HAVE CLASHED ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH IN THE VICINITY OF THIS LATEST INCIDENT IN TRAT.

2. THE SECOND INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICT (PRACHINBURI PROVINCE), WHEN KR FORCES

REPORTEDLY FIRED MORE THAN TEN MORTAR ROUNDS INTO A ABANDONED VILLAGE WHICH HAD BEEN THE SITE OF CAMBODIAN ATTACKS IN JANUARY AND WAS THE SCENE OF A BORDER CLASH BETWEEN THAI AND KR TROOPS ON JULY 21 (REFTEL A). THAI SECURITY FORCES IN ARANYAPRATHET REPORTEDLY REMAIN ON FULL ALERT, IN ANTICIPATION OF RENEWED FIGHTING ALONG THE CAMBODIAN BORDER.

3. THE COMMANDER OF RTA FORCES IN ARANYAPRATHET, LTC PRACHAK SAWANGCHIT, WAS REPLACED ON AUGUST 3 BY RTA COLONEL THANIT THAPANAN. PRACHAK, WHO IS A LEADING MEMBER OF THE SO-CALLED YOUNG TURK GROUP OF MILITARY OFFICERS, IS ALLEGED TO HAVE RESPONDED TO THE RECENT KR ATTACKS WITHOUT AWAITING ORDERS FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY. HIS REPLACEMENT, COL. THANIT, IS REPORTEDLY IN CLOSER STEP WITH SENIOR RTA OFFICERS.

4. THE 2ND ROYAL THAI ARMY HAS ORDERED TWO COMPANIES OF TROOPS TO THE BORDER PROVINCE OF SURIN FOLLOWING A CLASH BETWEEN THAI AND KR FORCES ON JULY 24 (REFTEL B). THE TWO COMPANIES WILL REPORTEDLY CONDUCT TRAINING EXERCISES IN THE SURIN AREA. THEIR PRESENCE WILL SERVE TO BOLSTER THAI SECURITY UNITS FOLLOWING A RUMORED BUILDUP OF KR FORCES IN THE BORDERING AREAS OF CAMBODIA.

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5. THAI AUTHORITIES IN TA PRAYA DISTRICT OF PRACHINBURI ARE FACING THE TASK OF RESETTLING VILLAGERS WHO HAVE HAD TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES FOLLOWING ATTACKS BY KR FORCES ON AUGUST 2 (REFTEL C). ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, MORE THAN 1,100 THAI VILLAGERS WERE LEFT HOMELESS AS A RESULT OF THE RECENT CLASHES IN TA PRAYA, WHILE MANY OTHERS MAY BE LEAVING THE BORDER TO SEEK PROTECTION AGAINST FURTHER KR ATTACKS.

COMMENT: THAI MILITARY HAVE ASSERTED FIRMER CONTROL OVER FORCES IN THE ARANYAPRATHET AREA AND HAVE INCREASED COMMITMENT OF TROOPS TO THE SURIN BORDER AREA. RTG DOES NOT WANT TO ENGAGE IN MAJOR ESCALATION IN THE BORDER AREA AND UNDOUBTEDLY HOPES IT CAN LIMIT REDEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS TO CAMBODIAN FRONTIER. DAO IS REPORTING FURTHER IN OWN CHANNEL. O'DONOHUE

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